

CONGRATULATING ENSIGN
DECAROL DAVIS

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1241) congratulating Ensign DeCarol Davis upon serving as the valedictorian of the Coast Guard Academy's class of 2008 and becoming the first African American female to earn this honor, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1241

Whereas Ensign DeCarol Davis is the first African American female to serve as the valedictorian of the Coast Guard Academy;

Whereas Ensign Davis is from Woodbridge, Virginia, and was the 2004 Forest Park High School valedictorian;

Whereas Ensign Davis's academic and military achievements at the Coast Guard Academy in a class of more than 200 cadets earned her the honor of graduating as valedictorian of the Coast Guard Academy's class of 2008;

Whereas Ensign Davis's accomplishments include selection as a 2007 Truman Scholar, receipt of the 2008 Connecticut Technology Council Women of Innovation Award, selection as a 2006 Arthur Ashe, Jr. Womens Basketball First Team Sports Scholar, and selection to the 2007 ESPN The Magazine Academic All-District I College Women's Basketball First Team;

Whereas Ensign Davis's community outreach during her four years at the Coast Guard Academy significantly impacted the lives of others, including those at a local elementary school where Ensign Davis wrote and directed a play that introduced engineering as a career to the students;

Whereas the Coast Guard Academy serves a critical role in training future leaders of the Coast Guard to carry out the service's missions, including protecting the lives and safety of those at sea and ensuring the safe operation of the marine transportation system; protecting the United States ports, waterways, and coastal communities and defending the United States homeland and United States national interests against hostile acts; enforcing United States maritime sovereignty and United States law, international conventions, and treaties including securing our borders against unlawful aliens and drugs; safeguarding United States marine resources; and responding to the threat of terrorism at ports and incidents of national significance, including transportation security incidents, to preserve life and to ensure the continuity of commerce and critical port and waterway functions;

Whereas the Coast Guard Academy has few minorities within the cadet population;

Whereas on April 24, 2008, the House of Representatives approved H.R. 2830, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2008, which included several provisions to improve the diversity of the Coast Guard Academy; and

Whereas Ensign Davis gave her valedictorian address on May 21, 2008: Now therefore be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) congratulates Ensign DeCarol Davis for becoming the first African American to serve as valedictorian of the Coast Guard Academy; and

(2) encourages the Coast Guard to seek diverse candidates for the cadet corps at the Coast Guard Academy and to continue to train and graduate cadets of a quality that the Coast Guard needs to fulfill each of its missions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution, H. Res. 1241.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Ensign DeCarol Davis was the valedictorian of the Coast Guard Academy, Class of 2008, the first African American to graduate as valedictorian of the Coast Guard Academy. But this is not the first time that Ensign Davis graduated at the top of her class. She was valedictorian of Forest Park High School, Woodbridge, Virginia, in 2004.

Ensign Davis is a very impressive young lady, a Truman Scholar. She won the 2008 Connecticut Technology Council Women of Innovation Award. She is a standout basketball player. She was a 2006 Arthur Ashe, Jr. Women's Basketball First Team Sports Scholar, and she was selected to the ESPN The Magazine Academic All-District I College Women's Basketball First Team.

She's now a commissioned officer in the Coast Guard. Ensign Davis will join 41,000 men and women wearing that unique color of blue, enforcing the Nation's laws on our waterways, making the waterways safe as well as secure, and has chosen to begin her career in the Coast Guard Marine Safety Program. I'm delighted to see that future leaders of the Coast Guard value that program.

I was at the Coast Guard Academy just 3 months ago, met with the Commandant of Cadets and the director of the academic program at the Coast Guard Academy, met with several of the cadets and sat in on one of the classes. And I must say each time I do, each time I hold a session with the Coast Guard, and each time I meet the cadets, I have enormous confidence in the future of the Coast Guard and its service to boating, to maritime safety, and to the future needs of the Coast Guard and our country.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 1241 recognizes Ensign DeCarol Davis for her extraordinary achievements as a cadet at the United States Coast Guard Academy. Ensign Davis graduated in May of this year as the valedictorian of her class of 2008, and is currently stationed with the Prevention Department at Coast Guard Sector New York.

During her 4 years as a cadet, Ensign Davis was selected as the Academy's

first Truman Scholar, honored as the 2007 Arthur Ashe, Jr. Female Sports Scholar of the Year, and served as the president of her Academy class. Ensign Davis also became very involved with student activities on campus and in the surrounding community of New London.

Ensign Davis is a shining example of the quality of men and women who make up the leaders and ranks of our Coast Guard, and I hope that the House's action today will encourage our young people to learn more about the Coast Guard Academy and the Coast Guard.

I support this resolution honoring Ensign Davis for her achievements.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the distinguished chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON).

□ 1430

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of legislation I authored to recognize a remarkable young woman, Ensign DeCarol Davis.

On May 21, 2008, Ensign Davis graduated from the Coast Guard Academy with a grade point average of 3.96 in electrical engineering. She earned the distinction of being the first African American valedictorian of the Coast Guard Academy.

The Coast Guard Academy was founded in 1876, but the first African American did not graduate from the institution until 1966. Women were not admitted to the school until 1976. Today, we honor Ensign Davis, who, through her hard work and perseverance, accomplished what no African American has done before her, she achieved the Academy's highest honor.

This achievement is remarkable, given that over the past three decades the number of minorities graduating from the Coast Guard Academy has not kept pace with the other military service academies. Legislation approved by the House earlier this year, Mr. Speaker, would bring about more diversity within the Coast Guard Academy by allowing Members of Congress to nominate individuals for this academy, just as we do all other military service academies.

I would also note that outside of the classroom Ensign Davis has distinguished herself as a community leader. On her own initiative, in the little spare time that she had, Ensign Davis wrote and directed a play for a local elementary school that introduced engineering as a possible career to the students.

During her time at the academy, Ensign Davis also excelled in sports. In fact, she was selected to be the 2006 Arthur Ashe First Team Sports Scholar for basketball. She was also selected to be on the 2007 ESPN Academic Women's Basketball Team for All-District

One Colleges. This is just a sample of this gifted young person's accomplishments. Ensign Davis clearly is destined for a successful career in the Coast Guard.

Earlier this month, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet Ensign Davis and spent some time getting to know her. During our meeting, she spoke passionately about her internship with D.C. Voice, a group of education activists concerned about public education in our Nation's capital. As a Truman scholar, Ensign Davis could have worked anywhere, but she chose to focus her energies on the District of Columbia and work to make a difference in the lives of thousands of children who attend D.C. public schools.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we honor Ensign DeCarol Davis for being a trailblazer whose academic accomplishments are matched by a commitment to protecting our Nation and contributing to our communities.

Congratulations to Ensign Davis and the rest of the Class of 2008. This Nation is appreciative of your commitment to service. Your talents are needed to ensure that the Coast Guard can continue to be a "can do" agency that we have all come to rely upon to keep our ports and waterways safe and secure.

I urge you to support this resolution and join me in recognizing a future leader of our country.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, at this time, it's my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), a former Coast Guardsman himself.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I had the good fortune to attend the graduation and exercises in 2008 at New London, Connecticut, home of the Coast Guard Academy, during which time Ensign Davis was recognized as the valedictorian of the graduating class. It was apparent to me that day, as I observed the proceedings, that she was held in very high esteem by her shipmates and her classmates.

And I felt real good, Mr. Speaker, as I spent most of the day on the campus of the Coast Guard Academy, as I viewed the spirit and the esprit de corps that was so obviously apparent. And I'm sure the same spirit and esprit de corps occurs in Kings Point, Annapolis, West Point, Colorado Springs, not only in our academies, but our training centers for the enlisted personnel throughout our armed services. If one doubts that we are prepared, I just urge him or her to visit one of the academies or one of the training centers throughout the country.

I am pleased to stand and honor Ensign Davis today, and to honor the U.S. Coast Guard, America's oldest continuous seagoing service.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, we have no further requests for time on our side, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good resolution. This is a worthy honor. I urge all Members to support it.

The only reason I wanted to take a little bit of time is, after Mr. COBLE spoke I was reminded that at our last Coast Guard hearing Mr. COBLE made the observation that he had served in the Coast Guard some period of time ago and he wondered what happened to the ship that he had actually served on. And as Mr. COBLE left the room, I felt bad, and even though we're a bipartisan bunch here, one of the Members on the other side of the aisle said he thinks he saw the ship in a tall ships museum. And I think that that was an unfair slight to Mr. COBLE and I'm sure that that's not true.

I urge passage of the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I yield myself the balance of our time to concur with the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from North Carolina is not that old.

His service with the Coast Guard was distinguished, noble, and a great asset to our community, as he brings to bear his service with that noble entity that goes back to the very foundations of our Nation when he participates in our Coast Guard hearings and markups. He deserves the term "distinguished," both for his service in the House and with the United States Coast Guard. And we're pleased to have him with us here on the floor today.

I congratulate Ensign Davis. I observed to Chairman THOMPSON that if each of us were to do as well in our elections with 3.96 percent, as she did in academics, we all would have something to cheer about.

That is an extraordinary academic record. It is an extraordinary career that she has led in the Coast Guard Academy, both in the classroom, on the field of play, and in the community. She is a talented, gifted young woman and will be an officer of distinguished service to the Coast Guard, but a role model for other young women, and I hope especially African-American women, to serve in the United States Coast Guard. I wish her continued success as she embarks on a remarkable journey with the U.S. Coast Guard.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 1241, congratulating Ensign DeCarol Davis as valedictorian of the Coast Guard Academy's class of 2008, with the distinction of being the first African American female to achieve this high honor.

Ms. Davis's outstanding achievements truly exemplify the character and work ethic that we strive to see in all of our Nation's young people.

The U.S. Coast Guard Academy not only maintains the highest academic standards but provides students with rigorous professional development and leadership training. After years of rigorous study and a commitment to excellence at the Academy, Ms. Davis' academic accomplishments have earned her the honor of valedictorian in a class of over 200 other outstanding cadets.

In addition to making history by becoming the first African American woman to serve as class valedictorian of the Coast Guard Academy, Ms. Davis also earned awards in science and technology—academic fields historically dominated by men.

In addition to being named valedictorian, Ms. Davis was also named a 2007 Truman Scholar and was a recipient of the 2008 Connecticut Technology Council Women of Technology Award. A well-rounded student, Ms. Davis excelled at sports, and was selected as a 2006 Arthur Ashe, Jr. Women's Basketball First Team Scholar.

No stranger to outstanding academic accomplishments, she also served as the 2004 valedictorian of Forest Park High School in her hometown of Woodbridge, VA.

Making community service a priority as well, Ms. Davis regularly volunteered at a local elementary school, introducing students to science, technology, and engineering as career paths.

At a time when Congress has encouraged the Academy to seek diversity in recruiting cadets, Ms. Davis stands as a testament to the quality of candidates that would result from this practice.

It is truly a pleasure to honor such an exceptional young woman who has now gone on to dedicate her career to serving and defending our country. I have no doubt that the rigor and discipline utilized to propel her academic career will certainly aid her development and success at the U.S. Coast Guard.

I congratulate this exceptional young woman for her service and commitment to excellence and wish her the very best.

I encourage my colleagues to support H. Res. 1241.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 1241, as amended, which congratulates Ensign DeCarol Davis for her selection as the first African American—and the first African American woman—to serve as valedictorian of a graduating class at the Coast Guard Academy.

I also commend Congressman BENNIE THOMPSON, Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, for his work on this resolution and for his tireless efforts to increase diversity not only within the Coast Guard but throughout the Department of Homeland Security.

Further, I commend Congressman TOM DAVIS, who represents Virginia's 11th District—the district in which Ensign Davis graduated from Forest Park High School as class valedictorian—for his work on this resolution and for his service on the Homeland Security Committee.

I recently had the privilege of meeting Ensign Davis, who spent her month of post-graduation leave volunteering with a non-profit in Washington, D.C. called D.C. Voices in a program that trains volunteers from the community to perform audits to catalog the needs of D.C. public schools.

Ensign Davis is a remarkable—and remarkably poised—young officer.

She has been selected as a Truman Scholar—a testament to her intellect and to her outstanding academic accomplishments.

Ensign Davis has also won numerous distinctions for her athletic accomplishments—including selection as a 2006 Arthur Ashe Jr.

First Team Sports Scholar for basketball and selection to the 2007 ESPN The Magazine Academic All-District I college women's basketball first team.

She combines excellence in the classroom and on the basketball court with a remarkable drive to give back to the community and to help create opportunities for others. In fact, it is her drive to serve others that led her to apply to the Coast Guard Academy.

By virtue of her accomplishments at the Academy, she could have chosen any assignment in the Coast Guard. She chose the service's marine safety program.

She told me that she made this choice because she wanted to spend her career working to ensure the safety of the maritime transportation system and preserving our Nation's marine resources.

Mr. Speaker, the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation has been greatly concerned that as the Coast Guard expands to take on its critical new homeland security missions, the service's competence in its traditional missions—particularly the marine safety missions—is declining.

I am confident, however, that with officers of the caliber and dedication of Ensign Davis joining the marine safety field, the future of this critical mission is bright indeed.

Ensign Davis is truly an inspiring example of the best that the Coast Guard and our Nation have to offer. I look forward to watching the progress of Ensign Davis's career in the coming years—and I know that we will see remarkable things from this young officer.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 1241, as amended, also encourages the Coast Guard to seek and enroll diverse candidates in the Academy's cadet corps.

I—and many of my colleagues in the House—are deeply concerned that the Coast Guard Academy's student body does not reflect the diversity of our Nation. Only about 10 percent of the class of 2009, for example, is comprised of minorities.

Our Nation's diversity is a strength—but when a school such as the Coast Guard Academy does not have a cadet corps that reflects that diversity, it does not benefit from that strength.

In April, the House of Representatives passed the Coast Guard Authorization Act, H.R. 2830, by a vote of 395 to 7. This legislation included provisions that I authored that would alter the admissions process at the Academy to require that students be nominated by a Member of Congress.

While I strongly support the actions that the Coast Guard is taking to expand the recruitment of diverse applicants, I also believe that enactment of H.R. 2830—with the provisions requiring nominations to the Academy—offers the best opportunity to expand diversity at the Academy. I urge the Senate to quickly act on this measure.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1241, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title was amended so as to read: "Resolution congratulating Ensign DeCarol Davis upon her serving as the valedictorian of the Coast Guard Academy's class of 2008 and becoming the first African-American to earn this honor, and encouraging the Coast Guard Academy to seek and enroll diverse candidates in the cadet corps."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AVIATION SAFETY ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2008

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6493) to amend title 49, United States Code, to enhance aviation safety, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6493

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Aviation Safety Enhancement Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. AVIATION SAFETY WHISTLEBLOWER INVESTIGATION OFFICE.

Section 106 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(S) AVIATION SAFETY WHISTLEBLOWER INVESTIGATION OFFICE.—

"(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the Federal Aviation Administration (in this section referred to as the 'Agency') an Aviation Safety Whistleblower Investigation Office (in this subsection referred to as the 'Office').

"(2) DIRECTOR.—

"(A) APPOINTMENT.—The head of the Office shall be the Director, who shall be appointed by the Secretary of Transportation.

"(B) QUALIFICATIONS.—The Director shall have a demonstrated ability in investigations and knowledge of or experience in aviation.

"(C) TERM.—The Director shall be appointed for a term of 5 years.

"(D) VACANCY.—Any individual appointed to fill a vacancy in the position of the Director occurring before the expiration of the term for which the individual's predecessor was appointed shall be appointed for the remainder of that term.

"(3) COMPLAINTS AND INVESTIGATIONS.—

"(A) AUTHORITY OF DIRECTOR.—The Director shall—

"(i) receive complaints and information submitted by employees of persons holding certificates issued under title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, and employees of the Agency concerning the possible existence of an activity relating to a violation of an order, regulation, or standard of the Agency or any other provision of Federal law relating to aviation safety;

"(ii) assess complaints and information submitted under clause (i) and determine whether a substantial likelihood exists that a violation of an order, regulation, or standard of the Agency or any other provision of Federal law relating to aviation safety may have occurred; and

"(iii) based on findings of the assessment conducted under clause (ii), make recommendations to the Administrator in writing for further investigation or corrective actions.

"(B) DISCLOSURE OF IDENTITIES.—The Director shall not disclose the identity of an

individual who submits a complaint or information under subparagraph (A)(i) unless—

"(i) the individual consents to the disclosure in writing; or

"(ii) the Director determines, in the course of an investigation, that the disclosure is unavoidable.

"(C) INDEPENDENCE OF DIRECTOR.—The Secretary, the Administrator, or any officer or employee of the Agency may not prevent or prohibit the Director from initiating, carrying out, or completing any assessment of a complaint or information submitted subparagraph (A)(i) or from reporting to Congress on any such assessment.

"(D) ACCESS TO INFORMATION.—In conducting an assessment of a complaint or information submitted under subparagraph (A)(i), the Director shall have access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, and other material necessary to determine whether a substantial likelihood exists that a violation of an order, regulation, or standard of the Agency or any other provision of Federal law relating to aviation safety may have occurred.

"(4) RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS.—The Administrator shall respond to a recommendation made by the Director under subparagraph (A)(iii) in writing and retain records related to any further investigations or corrective actions taken in response to the recommendation.

"(5) INCIDENT REPORTS.—If the Director determines there is a substantial likelihood that a violation of an order, regulation, or standard of the Agency or any other provision of Federal law relating to aviation safety may have occurred that requires immediate corrective action, the Director shall report the potential violation expeditiously to the Administrator and the Inspector General of the Department of Transportation.

"(6) REPORTING OF CRIMINAL VIOLATIONS TO INSPECTOR GENERAL.—If the Director has reasonable grounds to believe that there has been a violation of Federal criminal law, the Director shall report the violation expeditiously to the Inspector General.

"(7) ANNUAL REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Not later than October 1 of each year, the Director shall submit to Congress a report containing—

"(A) information on the number of submissions of complaints and information received by the Director under paragraph (3)(A)(i) in the preceding 12-month period;

"(B) summaries of those submissions;

"(C) summaries of further investigations and corrective actions recommended in response to the submissions; and

"(D) summaries of the responses of the Administrator to such recommendations."

SEC. 3. MODIFICATION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVE.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) Subsections (a) and (d) of section 40101 of title 49, United States Code, directs the Federal Aviation Administration (in this section referred to as the "Agency") to make safety its highest priority.

(2) In 1996, to ensure that there would be no appearance of a conflict of interest for the Agency in carrying out its safety responsibilities, Congress amended section 40101(d) of such title to remove the responsibilities of the Agency to promote airlines.

(3) Despite these directives from Congress regarding the priority of safety, the Agency issued a vision statement in which it stated that it has a "vision" of "being responsive to our customers and accountable to the public" and, in 2003, issued a customer service initiative that required aviation inspectors